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ARIZONA AWARDED \$12 MILLION FOR INNOVATIVE HEALTH SYSTEM
Napolitano says state's leadership will bring the nation cost savings, efficiency

PHOENIX – Arizona has been awarded a \$12 million federal grant to launch a Web based electronic health records system to exchange health information between Medicaid physicians, hospitals and other health care providers. Governor Janet Napolitano announced that the funds – the largest single grant received by any state – were awarded to the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

This major project will allow AHCCCS to electronically store AHCCCS member health information and provide that information at the point of service. For example, if an AHCCCS patient came into an emergency room, the ER physician would have medical information instantly available – including medications, lab work and important medical history – allowing the physician to be more informed, and provide the best treatment for the patient.

The goal of this project is to reduce duplicative care, health care administrative costs as well as to avoid errors in care. DHHS has determined that the national implementation of electronic Health Information Sharing could save \$140 billion.

“Once again, Arizona has proven its leadership by demonstrating new approaches to old problems,” said Governor Napolitano. “It’s gratifying to be recognized on the national level, and particularly rewarding to know that the innovative work developed here will be made available to other states.”

Under Governor Napolitano’s leadership, a health information sharing roadmap was developed by various representatives in the health care field. From that effort a nonprofit organization was created, Arizona Health-e Connection, which will be working to provide the standards and operating requirements for the exchange of information for public and private health care programs. Arizona Health-e Connection has concentrated on developing policies to ensure protection of consumer privacy. The grant is important because it allows AHCCCS, which provides health care to more than one million people, to be integrated into the overall state effort.

The pilot testing will start in January 2008 with volunteer provider offices and hospitals. It is the goal of the program that all AHCCCS providers will have access to electronic health information by the end of 2011.

The federal dollars provided in the grant are part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which will distribute \$150 million over fiscal years 2007 and 2008. To learn more please visit www.hhs.gov.